



# Agency on Aging

OF SOUTH CENTRAL CONNECTICUT

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## Traits of a Caregiver

There are more than 65 million people in the United States who are family care givers. The value of the care they provide is incalculable: financial value and contribution to the quality of life. Where would we be without family caregivers?

I am often asked why in every family one person becomes the family caregiver. Ask a care recipient who their caregiver is and there's usually just one person named, although often, there's an afterthought saying something like "they all help the best they can".

What I have observed over the years is that there are specific traits in almost all long-term caregivers. They may have wildly different personalities and relationships with their loved ones but there is a constellation of traits that are always present.

- The long-term caregiver has to have the capacity to be patient. They may not be patient with themselves or with others, but they recognize the need to be patient with the person they're caring for.
- They need to feel compassion for the person they care for. They need to truly be able to imagine what it feels like to need a caregiver and that intimate understanding bolsters them in tough times when caregiving gets rough.
- They have to be attentive to details. They often become the eyes and ears of the person they care for and the entire extended family.
- They need to be trustworthy. Whether it's trust handling finances or trust sharing confidences or trust that embarrassing stories won't be widely shared. The care recipient needs to know they can trust them with their life.
- Lastly, they have to be dependable. The care recipient needs to know that no matter what happens, their caregiver will be there when they need them.

If you possess these traits, you may be selected to become someone's caregiver.